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ABSTRACT

A major consideration in the dissemination of any evaluation reports should be the uses of the target populations who will receive them. In the development of evaluation in and for the Piedmont Schools Project, the following uses have been found critical: formative evaluation on a continuing planned basis and on request from program and instructional people, the accumulation of base-line data in several areas for use in determining change as the Project develops for Project and School District decision-makers, and the accumulation and processing of the data in such a form as to make it directly usable in the refunding request. The initial efforts of the evaluation team have been directed toward assisting the instructional and management people in the attaching of behavioral meanings to the goals and objectives of the Project. Doing so facilitated the formulation of a productive evaluation plan in the form of an organizational chart which is included in the document. The chart illustrates seven main blocks giving the major evaluation thrusts, with varying numbers of smaller boxes explicating in some detail the implementation of these thrusts. (RC)

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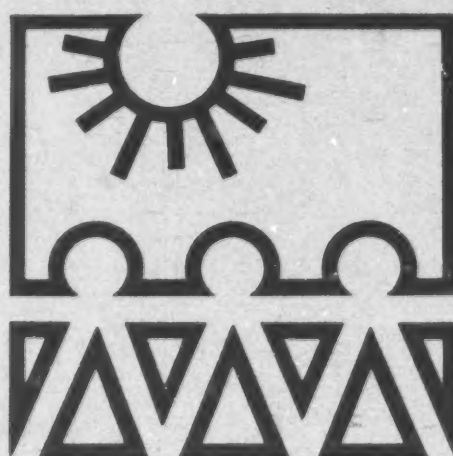
Piedmont



Schools Project

The School District of Greenville County

Greer, South Carolina



"seeking a better way in education"

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A LARGE COUNTY-WIDE SCHOOL SYSTEM
POINT OF VIEW ON EVALUATION
Lin Tisdell
Greenville (S.C.) Schools

22.17/SCHOOL EVALUATION--A VARIETY OF
MODELS IN EXPERIMENTAL SCHOOLS
(Symposium, Division H)

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A LARGE COUNTY-WIDE SCHOOL SYSTEM POINT
OF VIEW ON EVALUATION

The setting for the Piedmont Schools Project, an N.I.E./Experimental Schools site, is in the School District of Greenville County, South Carolina. The School District of Greenville County has 93 public schools staffed by approximately 2,900 certificated professionals and 1,600 other employees, all serving the educational needs of some 57,000 students in grades K-12. The Project schools consist of eight schools in and around Greer, South Carolina. There are six elementary schools (K-5) feeding one middle school (6-8), which in turn feeds one high school (9-12). This system permits, of course, following students at all levels for the full five-year term of the Project. The eight schools of the Project serve some 4,545 students with a certificated professional staff of 247 and 163 other employees, which include paraprofessionals in art, music and physical education who are under experimental use as teachers. Unfortunately, from an evaluation point of view, an additional high school adjacent to the Project area opened in the second year of the Project's operation and will draw off some of the students who would ordinarily have attended the one Project high school. Precisely how, or whether, to follow up on the students who leave the Project schools before the end of five years has not been determined.

Any evaluation of the students, schools or programs of the eight schools in the actual Project area must, of course, interface with the evaluation and research efforts of the School District and State of which they are a part.

The School District of Greenville County is committed to implementing any of the programs, methodologies, or materials which evaluation efforts show to be an improvement on current practices so long as such implementation is

feasible. But the dissemination of evaluative information is a two-way street, i.e., the Project will benefit from the information provided by the School District as well as the District profiting from the evaluation reports stemming from the Project.

A major consideration in the dissemination of any evaluation reports should be the uses of the target populations who will receive them. In the development of evaluation in and for the Piedmont Schools Project, we have found the following critical uses:

1. Formative information on a continuing planned basis and on request by program and instructional people.
2. The accumulation of base-line data in several areas for use in determining change as the Project develops for Project and School District decision-makers as well as Level II evaluation.
3. The accumulation and processing of the data in such a form as to make it directly usable in the refunding request.

Consideration of the several uses and divergent populations also shows that different levels of sophistication will have to be used in reporting, i.e., Washington might well want statistical tests of significance in the refunding request while the Project program and instructional personnel would find such tests unusable and prefer that the number and percentage of boys and girls attaining various levels of achievement be reported. The foregoing statement implies that one very important task of the evaluation team is to learn to report in the various languages of the people whom it serves. For most, if not all, of the staff this is the first time they have had an evaluator, much less an evaluation team, in residence. It is largely incumbent upon us, as evaluators, to demonstrate ways in which we can help the

various populations make better decisions with the information we can provide.

Most of us who fall under the rubric "evaluators" would insist that evaluators be brought into any project at its inception so as to help insure that the structure is such that meaningful evaluation can take place. Unfortunately, as is often the case, the evaluation team did not become a reality until some six months after the Project was in operation. The first year of virtually any project is almost all taken up as a "shake down," as the business of starting-up occupies the minds and efforts of all personnel. Projects, when approved, are little more than paper documents. A critical element of the "shake down," therefore, is the attaching of behavioral meaning to the terms contained in the document. A major consideration during this period is the role of instructional and project management people, on the one hand, and of evaluation people, on the other, in the process of attaching these behavioral meanings. Evaluators can, and should, help; but if they take primary responsibility they pre-empt the responsibilities which should remain with the instructional and management personnel, because the Project responsibility really is theirs. Furthermore, instruction and management are their fields of expertise--not the fields of expertise to which evaluators can, or should, lay claim.

The initial efforts of the Level I evaluation team have been directed, therefore, toward assisting, where possible, the instructional and management people in the attaching of behavioral meanings to the goals and objectives of the Project. Doing so facilitated the formulation of a productive evaluation plan which will make it possible to fulfill the evaluation team's mission of gathering and delivering useful information to the Project as it develops. That plan is presented in the hand-out you have which is entitled "Piedmont Schools Project - Level I Evaluation Program, 1973-74." The organization of the chart,

as you can see, is seven main blocks giving the major evaluation thrusts, with varying numbers of smaller boxes explicating in some detail the carrying out of the major thrusts.

Reading from left to right, the first block is "Improve use and quality of evaluation, and of the services of the Level I program." Obviously, evaluation is effective only if the quality of the information given is good and the people receiving it know how to use it. Toward that end the Level I staff has conducted and will continue to conduct in-service workshops, consultation with teacher groups (e.g. the high school English staff), and assistance to individuals. The Level I team provides test construction, scoring and analysis services to the teachers as well as technical assistance to any and all of the Project staff. As indicated earlier, the State, the District and various federal projects have formalized testing programs going on in Project schools. The evaluation team assists with these testing programs in any way that it can. Observation of test administration and test-taking procedures strongly indicates the need for assistance if the data gathered is to be reliable, valid and useful.

The second block is "Process, analyze and transmit data efficiently." Level I has had to carry a great deal of the load here because the District has only recently obtained a computer. When it was selected, its function was defined as the handling of business and administrative operations. The computer center staff works full time in those matters so that a Level I staff member has had to write and adapt the programs unique to evaluation. The need for "clean" student data is heightened by the presence of a Level II evaluation team who must do longitudinal studies. This implies, of course, a student master file that is accurate and reliable while maintaining the confidentiality

of any given student. Quick turn-around time is absolutely essential to good formative evaluation. With the computer center personnel working full time, and more, on business and administrative matters, Level I has largely had to provide its own data processing.

The third block is "Evaluate the feasibility of the extended school year." The efforts of the evaluation team here have largely been to assist the staff member responsible for this study in the design, implementation and analysis of surveys (mail and interview) of the attitudes of the students, teachers, community and business leaders toward a proposed extended-school-year plan.

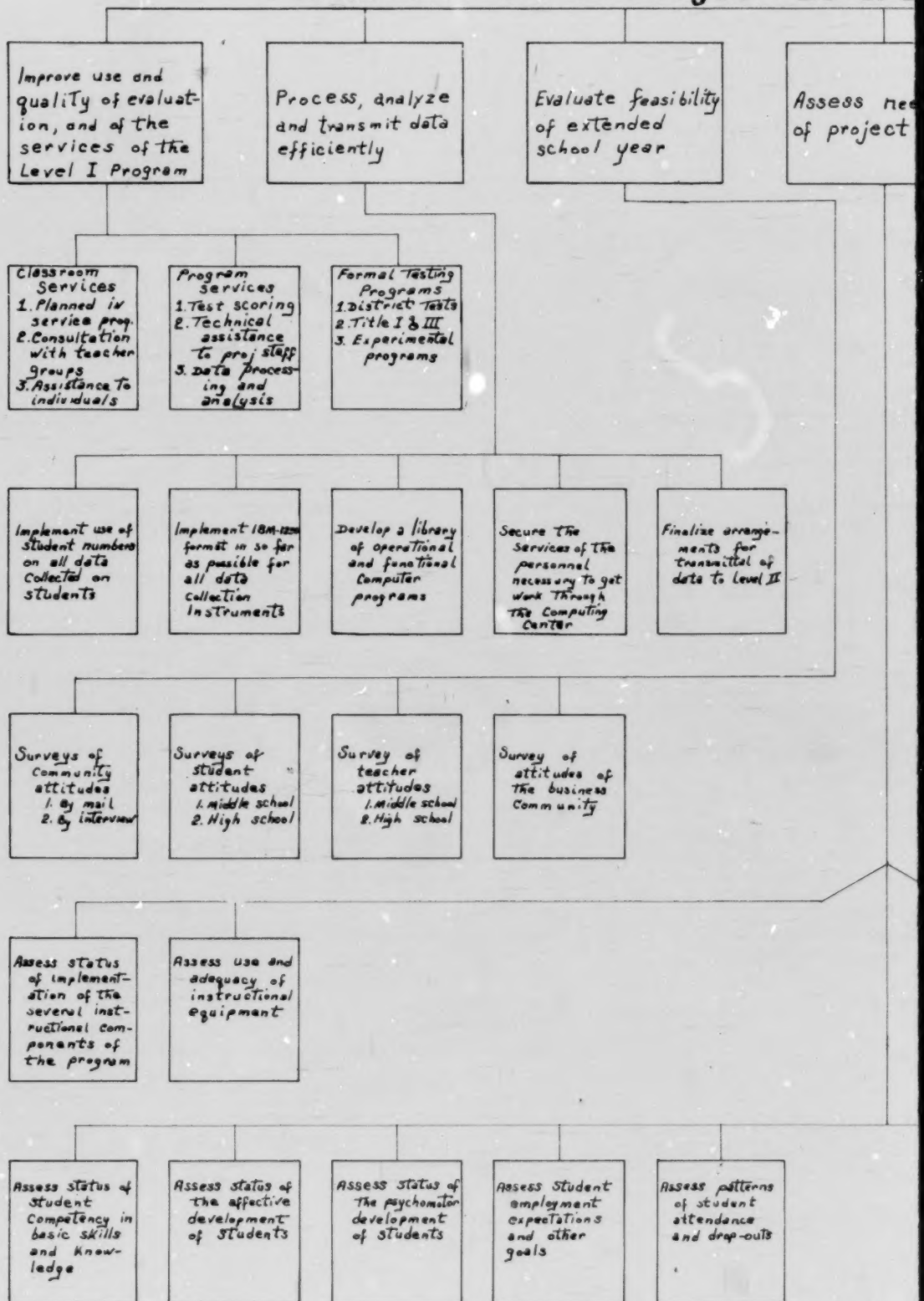
The fourth block deals with an effort to "Assess the needs of the Project." The areas of concern for the needs assessment are quite comprehensive (fourteen in all) and constitute the major portion of the work of the Level I staff. Each member of the evaluation team is assigned to three or four of the fourteen committees to assist in the design and implementation of on-going (cyclical) needs assessment efforts in areas ranging from student achievement to faculty and staff competency.

The fifth block is "Disseminate information." Level I efforts in this area are directed toward preparing information in a usable form for presentation or release to audiences comprised of District and Project staffs, teachers, students, parents, and business, church and civic groups, and the news media. In addition, the background, training and sensitivities of the evaluation team's members make it possible for them to assist other Project members in preparing their reports. One staff member has experience as a journalist and editor, three have been classroom teachers and another has done social work.

Block six is "Meet unscheduled requests for services." This is included in recognition of the fact that we must, as much as possible, plan for the unplanned. Past experience has shown that requests have (and will) be made to the evaluation team by various Project and District staff members, community educational interest groups, principals, teachers and others. The evaluation team feels that it is imperative to meet whenever possible bona fide requests which might impact on the Project schools, staff and students.

The seventh and final block is "Contribute to administrative studies by the District." These projects differ from those mentioned in block six in that they are planned. The District Superintendent has projected three such studies and the Piedmont Schools Project evaluation team has been included in those plans. These and other such studies will make heavy demands on the Level I staff but, as stated earlier, information dissemination is a two-way street; the Project will benefit from these studies as much as will any other area in the District.

Piedmont Schools Project-Level I



Evaluation Program-1973-74

